



Let's Talk

Stuttering in Young Children

“When my son was 4, he started having trouble talking. Keith would repeat the first part of many words and sometimes couldn't get any sounds out. A few times he started crying because he was so mad that he couldn't talk. My husband used to stutter as a child, so we were worried about Keith.”

—Julia

Do You Think Your Child Is Stuttering?

Many children between the ages of 2 and 4 years old start stuttering as they learn to talk. Your child's speech and language, thinking, and motor skills are still developing. During this time, it may be hard for him to get his words out.

Before the age of 7, you may hear your child repeat words and say “uh” and “um.” This is normal. It should happen less often as speech and language skills develop. However, stuttering often begins during this same time period. This can make it hard to tell if your child is beginning to stutter or is just going through a normal stage of development.

What's Normal?

Everyone has times when their speech is not smooth. We all say “um” or repeat a sound now and then. You may hear your child repeat whole words or phrases. You will usually hear this only once in a while, not all the time. This is normal and should not cause you to worry.

What Are the Signs of Stuttering?

Your child may be at risk for stuttering if he or she:

- Repeats parts of words, like *t-t-t-table* or *tay-tay-tay-table*
- Uses the “uh” sound (instead of the correct vowel) when repeating, like *tuh-tuh-tuh-table*
- Prolongs or holds a sound too long, like *sssssun*

Fast facts

- Many children go through a period of time when they stutter.
- Stuttering is also called a fluency disorder.
- Speech-language pathologists, or SLPs, can help.

- Has an uneven rhythm when repeating sounds, like *b-b---b---*
boy
- Opens his or her mouth to speak and nothing comes out
- Has breaks or stops in between repetitions of sounds
- Struggles to produce speech by making a face or getting very tense when trying to speak

What Causes Stuttering?

It may be different for everyone. What we do know is that your child may be at a higher risk for stuttering if he:

- Has other family members who stutter
- Has been stuttering longer than 12 months
- Began to stutter after age 3½
- Has other speech or language problems

Boys are more likely to stutter than girls.

How Can Speech-Language Pathologists Help?

A speech-language pathologist, or SLP, can work with children with speech and language disorders. Your child's SLP can help your child speak more smoothly.

Will Treatment Make a Difference?

Your child's SLP will find out what types of problems your child is having. The SLP may also test to find out how well your child says sounds and uses and understands words. The SLP will work with your child to find ways for him to say words and sentences without stuttering. Your child may learn to:

- Find ways to relax when speaking
- Breathe easier when talking
- Practice talking to different people in different places

Stuttering is usually a lifelong problem. But your child can learn to control his speech and stutter less.



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Where Can I Learn More?

The Stuttering Foundation

www.stutteringhelp.org

National Stuttering Association

www.westutter.org

National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD)

www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/voice/stutter.asp

“Keith worked with his SLP on ways to start words without stuttering. He also learned to relax his body when he talked so that he could get words out more easily. He still stutters sometimes, especially when he’s excited, but not as much as before. He is not as afraid to talk to his friends, and he isn’t as frustrated. I know he’ll deal with this for a long time, but he’s doing so much better now.”

—Julia

Stuttering can change your child’s life. Help is available.

To learn more about stuttering or to find an SLP near you who has been certified by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), visit www.asha.org or call 800-638-8255 or (TTY) 301-296-5650.

My SLP’s name is

Appointment

Compliments of
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)
and